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WCC Executive Commends Statements on Hungary and Suez

The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, in session at Geneva, Feb. 4-8, has commended the officers of the council for the statements they issued last November about the Hungarian and Suez crises. The statements quoted reports made at the 1954 WCC Assembly and expressed shock and sorrow "at the tragic reversal suffered by the Hungarian people, who had clearly asserted their desire for freedom and independence in national and church life." (see EPS No. 43, 1956). Both the statements will be included in the minutes of the Executive Committee.

Reviewing what he called "a period largely dominated by factors exterior to the life of the Church," the general secretary of the WCC, Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, told the 12-member committee that the pressure of the Hungarian and Suez crises had given the churches "new opportunities to demonstrate what our movement is and why it exists."

The committee also voted to let the officers of the council decide on the next action in regard to the postponed conversations with the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, originally set down for late in January. In his report to the committee, Dr. Visser 't Hooft said the Moscow Patriarchate had asked for the conversations to be delayed "for a little while." The officers now have the authority to decide if the WCC should bring up the matter at some future time or wait for correspondence from Moscow. Dr. Visser 't Hooft reported, however, that the Patriarchate had accepted the agenda for the proposed conversations, including discussion of Hungary and Suez.

There have been no developments at all regarding conversations with church representatives from the Chinese People's Republic, Dr. Visser 't Hooft said. The Chinese churches had made no suggestion about official delegations to China, but the Central Committee last August said it believed such a visit "would increase goodwill, understanding and fellowship within the world-wide Christian community as represented by the World Council of Churches."

Bishop Sante Uberto Barbieri of the Latin America Conference, one of the presidents of the World Council, told the committee of the success of the first ecumenical youth team to visit Latin America. The team, which is visiting twelve countries between November 17 and March 1, was a new way of encountering Christianity for the Latin American, Bishop Barbieri said. Until now, he pointed out, the influence of theology and worship of Protestantism has been from North America.

Though Latin American churches are "so denominationally minded," the bishop said, there is a desire among the young people to come together. In the Argentina Conference, which he administers for the Methodist Church, young ministers have insisted on forming committees on church union.

"If we want to win Latin America, we need literature in Spanish and Portugese on the work of the World Council of Churches is doing," he said. The bishop commended members of the ecumenical team who spoke Spanish during their visit and team director, the Rev. Bengt-Thure Molander, who made speeches in Spanish - "with a Swedish accent."

Chairman of the Committee is Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, United Lutheran from the United States.

E.P.S., Geneva

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WCC Executive Committee interprets its Hungary and Suez

The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, in session at Geneva, Feb. 1-8, has commended the efforts of the Council for the relief of Hungary issued last November about the Hungarian and Suez crisis. The statement quotes reports made at the 1957 WCC Assembly and expresses thank and sympathy "to the Hungarian refugees and vigorous church leaders who during the bitter revolt and suffering of the Hungarian people, who had already assumed their duties for freedom and independence in spiritual and church life." (See RNS May 14, 1957). Both the statements will be included in the minutes of the Executive Committee.

Declaring that he could "a priori hardly imagined by factual criticism to the life of the Church," the general secretary of the WCC, Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, said the 12-member committee that the "reports of the Hungarian and Suez crises had given the churches such opportunity to reconsider what our movement is and why it exists."

The committee also voted to ask the officers of the Council should be the main action to report to the postponed consultation with the Roman Catholics of the Russian Orthodox Church, originally set down for late in January. In his report to the committee, Dr. Visser 't Hooft said the Roman Catholics had asked for the conversations to be delayed "for a little while." The officers are now the authority to decide if the WCC should bring up the matter at some future time or wait for correspondence from Moscow. Dr. Visser 't Hooft reported, however, that the Russian Orthodox had accepted the agenda for the proposed conversations, including discussion of Hungary and Suez.

There have been no developments at all regarding conversations with church representatives from the Chinese Republic Church, Dr. Visser 't Hooft said. The Chinese churches had made no suggestion about official delegations to China, but the Geneva committee last August said it believed such a visit "would be helpful, underscoring and reflecting within the world-wide Christian community as represented by the World Council of Churches."

Bishop Sante Uberto, President of the Latin American Conference, one of the seminars of the World Council, told the committee of the success of the first organized youth tour to visit Latin America. The tour, which is stirring lively exchange between December 17 and March 1, was a way of encouraging "responsibility for the Latin American Protestant Church." Bishop Uberto said, on the tour, the influence of theology and worship of Protestantism was seen from many angles.

"Though Latin American churches are in desperately limited," the Bishop said, there is a desire among the young people for more knowledge. In the Dominican Republic, it is by ministering for the industrial church, young industrers have reached on forming committees on church union.

"If we want to win Latin America, we need literature in Spanish and Portuguese on the work of the World Council of Churches in detail," he said. The Bishop recommended some of the seminarist time was spent in making their visits and home devotion. Dr. Joseph-Jacques Malvaley, who made speaking in Spanish - "with a Italian accent."

Chairman of the Committee is Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, United Lutheran Church from the United States.

UNITED KINGDOM

First Word on Lambeth Conference Agenda for 1958

(London) - Subjects to be included on the agenda when more than 300 bishops of the Anglican Communion meet at Lambeth Palace, London, in July and August, 1958, include the Authority of the Bible, Church Unity and the Church Universal, the recognition of "local saints and servants of God", reconciling of conflicts between and within nations, and the position of the family in modern society.

Ecumenical discussion will cover the draft reunion plans for Ceylon and for Northern India and Pakistan.

In a review of progress in the Anglican communion the contemporary missionary appeal and means of advance will be discussed, principles of the revision of the Book of Common Prayer determined, and forms of ministry (including supplementary ministries) will be considered in the light of manpower problems.

The conference will discuss social pressures threatening family life and overpopulation in certain parts of the world.

Some attention may also be given to divine healing. E.P.S., Geneva

GERMANY

Niemöller on "The Issues of the Next Thirty Years"

(Essen) - By its professed example and obedience, the community of Jesus Christ must, both now and in time to come, show its mettle in dealing with the tension between East and West and with race conflicts, declared Dr. Martin Niemöller in a speech to the congregation at Essen.

There was, it was true, no such thing as a "Christian West" and there had never been, said Dr. Niemöller in this connection, but the community of Jesus has left its mark on the western scene. Its most important legacy was the knowledge that man has a value which cannot be surrendered. This knowledge was worth defending. The "blind world of the East" did not realize that it was robbing man of his dignity and breeding officials. Today, however, there was a quite general drift towards totalitarianism and towards the undermining of human dignity in spiritual, economic and political life. The value and dignity of man could be defended only by waging a battle for his soul and mind.

Race problems, added Dr. Niemöller, were, next to the tension between East and West, the area in which the greatest convulsions were imminent. Thirty years from now, the mighty growth of the colored world would affront us with the passing of world domination from the white to the colored man. This transition should not take the form of a vengeance of the colored man on the white. It followed that it was imperative on grounds of prudence, too, to reach an understanding with the colored world under the banner of Christian mercy and love. E.P.S., Geneva

GERMANY

New Roman Catholic Bishop of Berlin and Christian Unity

(Würzburg) - Bishop Julius Döpfner of Würzburg has been appointed to succeed the late Bishop Wilhelm Weskamm as Bishop of Berlin. Julius Döpfner, at 43, is the youngest Roman Catholic bishop in Germany. During his term of office in the Würzburg diocese, which he took over in 1948, he delivered special sermons each year during the Octave of world-wide prayer for Christian unity.

In January 1957 he emphasized that for Catholic Christians, too, though bound by the teaching of the Church, participation in the ecumenical discussion was stimulating and fruitful. "We do not wish to appear satisfied and self-sufficient among our questing brethren. We confess openly and gratefully that we owe Protestant theology ideas which we would not like to have missed," he said. It was "deeply to be deplored if representatives of the priesthood, and indeed any Catholics, were to fall a prey to rigid narrow-mindedness and an unjustifiable attitude of infallibility."

In a farewell to his diocese, the Bishop of Würzburg said: "I am now going, in obedience to the Holy Father, into a purely 'diaspora' diocese, where a really ecumenical attitude is, if possible, still more necessary. Please, therefore, take this plea in my last sermon in the Octave of world-wide prayer as the bequest of your departing bishop: and take all the action you can in prayer or deed, and with all your strength and love,

UNITED KINGDOM

First Work on Swedish Conference Agenda for 1958

(London) - Subjects to be included on the agenda when more than 300 delegates of the Anglican Communion meet at Lambeth Palace, London, in July or August, 1958, include the Authority of the Bible, Church Unity and the Church Universal, the recognition of local saints and servants of God", reconciling of conflicts between and within nations, and the position of the family in modern society.

Ecumenical discussion will cover the draft service plans for Ceylon and for Northern India and Pakistan.

In a review of progress in the Anglican Communion by conferences by delegates appeal and means of advance will be discussed, priorities of the problems of the Book of common Prayer determined, and forms of activity (including supplementary activities) will be considered in the light of manpower problems.

The conference will discuss social questions threatening family life and overpopulation in certain parts of the world.

Some attention may also be given to divine healing. N.C.C., Geneva

GERMANY

Bishop Dibelius on "The Issues of the Near Eastern Issue"

(Essen) - By the proclaimed equality and brotherhood, the community of Jesus Christ must, both now and in time to come, show its ability in dealing with the tension between East and West and with race conflicts, declared Dr. Otto Dibelius in a speech to the congregation at Essen.

There was, it was true, no such thing as a "Christian World" and there had never been, said Dr. Dibelius in this connection, but the community of Jesus has left the mark on the western scene. The most important legacy was the knowledge that man has a value which cannot be surrendered. This knowledge was worth defending. The "Christ world" of the West did not realize that it was nothing more of its dignity and breathing officials. Today, however, there was a quite general "anti" towards totalitarianism and towards the endeavoring of human dignity in spiritual, economic and political life. The value and dignity of man could be defended only by making a battle for his soul and mind.

Race problems, added Dr. Dibelius, were, next to the tension between East and West, the area in which the greatest convulsions were imminent. Thirty years from now, the dignity growth of the colored world would confront us with the passing of world domination from the white to the colored man. This transition should not take the form of a vengeance of the colored man on the white. It followed that it was imperative on churches of tolerance, too, to reach an understanding with the colored world under the banner of Christian mercy and love. N.C.C., Geneva

GERMANY

Pen Young Pastoral Elders of Berlin and Christian Unity

(Wuppertal) - Bishop Julius Dahlmann of Berlin-Brandenburg has been appointed to succeed the late Bishop William Wagner as Bishop of Berlin. Julius Dahlmann, at 41, is the youngest German episcopal clergy in Germany. During the term of office in the Wuppertal diocese, which he took over in 1948, he delivered special sermons each year during the Lenten of world-wide prayer for Christian unity.

In January 1957 he emphasized that for Catholic Christians, too, though based by the authority of the church, participation in the ecumenical discussion was stimulating and fruitful. "We do not wish to create artificial and self-sufficient sects, nor quarreling factions. We confess openly and joyfully that we are fundamental theology ideas which we would not like to have missed," he said. It was clearly to be regretted if representatives of the priesthood, and indeed any Catholics, were to fail a prey to rigid narrowmindedness and an unpalatable attitude of intolerability."

In a farewell to his diocese, the Bishop of Wuppertal said: "I am now going, in obedience to the Holy Father, into a purely ideological diseases, where a really ecumenical activity is, if possible, until more necessary. Please, therefore, take this plea in my last sermon in the Cathedral of world-wide prayer as the bequest of your departing bishop;

NEW ZEALAND — Youth Conference Studies Unity

Over 1000 young people from eight communions met in Palmerston North, New Zealand, from December 27 to January 14, in a conference with the theme "Christ Unites", called by the Youth Committee of the National Council of Churches.

Successive days were given to studying the implications of Christ's reconciling power in various aspects of life. The challenge of South East Asia was presented by the Rev. Alan A. Brash, one of the two New Zealand representatives of the forthcoming East Conference in Prapat, Indonesia, from March 18-27. The racial issue was presented by Dr. Maha Winiata, a Maori leader, and the issues of international peace by Miss Patricia Morrison, general secretary of the New Zealand Student Christian Movement.

At the request of the delegates, an offering of £N.Z. 780 was received at the final service, to be devoted to leadership training in Indonesia.

Overseas speakers included the Rev.Dr. George McLeod of the Iona Community, Scotland; the Rev. Rex Mathias, secretary to the Mission to the Nation in Australia; and the Rev. Dr. Ralph Hyslop, director of the Program of Advanced Religious Studies at Union Theological Seminary, New York.

The Rev. Alan A. Brash, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, commenting on the success of the conference, said: "We dare not forget that its main implication is that it reveals the failure of the churches to present in its fullness the reconciling Gospel of Christ. The best young people in all of the churches were so isolated from one another that they met as strangers, and though they rejoiced at things in common, it should not have come to them as a surprise. Our churches must alter their methods so that there will never be such separateness again." E.P.S., Geneva

U.S.S.R. — Patriarch of Moscow Answers Danish Bishops

Patriarch Alexius of Moscow and all Russia has replied to a letter from the Danish Bishops H. Fuglsang-Damgaard and Erik Jensen (see EPS No. 4).

"Together with you," the Patriarch writes, "we feel deeply for the Hungarian people which has had to bear an unparallelled load of suffering as a result of the fateful course of events. In conformity with the words of the apostle that life becomes more radiant through God's word and through prayer, we have not ceased to implore the most merciful Lord to send down his mercy on the suffering people of Hungary. Thanks be to the Lord! Peace reigns once again on Hungarian soil and its people have returned to constructive work. In an attempt to relieve the sufferings of the Hungarian people and to support their efforts for reconstruction, the Russian Orthodox Church has felt it its duty to make a contribution to this holy cause..."

The Danish Bishops had requested the Russian Orthodox Patriarch "to make his great spiritual influence felt in order to safeguard the freedom of the Hungarian people and bring about a just peace and put an end to the sufferings of the nation." E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED STATES — Methodist Mission Board Speaks on Race, Immigration

A resolution calling on Methodists to "speak in the spirit of Christ wherever and whenever racial tensions are involved" was adopted by the denomination's Board of Missions at its annual meeting last month at Buck Hill Falls, Pa.

At the same time, the board asked Methodists to "work with all urgency" for a thorough revision of the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act. It said the revision should provide for the admission of at least 300,000 immigrants a year, without regard to race, national origin or sex. First consideration, the resolution said, should be given to reuniting families, providing havens for refugees and displaced persons and relieving population pressures. It added that any revision of the law should also eliminate unnecessary delays and uncertainties in the admission of students and others trying to visit the United States for legitimate purposes.

The board deplored the need of Hungarian refugees to depend on emergency legislation and observed that "millions of other refugees have waited for resettlement, some for as long as ten years." E.P.S., Geneva

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The board deplored the need of Hungarian refugees to depend on emergency legislation and observed that "millions of other refugees have waited for resettlement, some for as long as ten years." E.P.S., Geneva

Churches Give $800,000 for Hungary and Eastern Europe

More than $800,000 has been received or pledged for relief operations in answer to an appeal in November, the Administrative Committee of the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches was told at its January 30 to February 1 meeting in Geneva. The appeal, the result of uprisings in Hungary, was to aid refugees, help Christian churches and institutions in Hungary and provide relief shipments.

The 11-member committee noted "with gratitude" the response of the member churches of the WCC to the Division's appeal for the present emergency in Hungary and for other Eastern European countries, and called for continued gifts for the whole refugee program. "The general atmosphere is that we can expect a substantial movement of refugees all over Europe in the next few years," Dr. Edgar H. S. Chandler, WCC director of Service to Refugees, reported.

The World Council of Churches moved a total of 28,459 refugees during the past year, Dr. Chandler told the group, but added, "The figures are not important unless you see behind each one a refugee." By the middle of January, 4,777 Hungarians registered with the WCC had received visas or were sent on parole to the United States. In one of the most amazing events in history, Dr. Chandler said, governmental agencies cut red tape and church agencies have moved quickly to help resettle the refugees of the revolution in Hungary. To date about 105,000 persons have left Austria.

To help do the job, the WCC's staff of sixty in Austria has more than doubled since last October and six mobile teams are now at work giving welfare, pastoral and counselling services. There are, however, about 70,000 refugees still in Austria. The Austrian government is able to care for only about 20,000 permanently.

At the same time, Dr. Chandler announced that in addition to the resettlement of Hungarians, 30,078 persons have entered the United States under the recently expired US Refugee Relief Act 1953-6. Dr. R. Norris Wilson, a committee member and executive director of Church World Service, added that each refugee was met in the United States by a person who was responsible for him. He pointed out that through CWS, the US churches provided a total of 60,000 assurances for refugees.

While many of the refugees are not professing Christians, the Division's director, Dr. Leslie Cooke, said "that the church has made its witness to them by assisting them in the refugee camps and in their resettlement."

Dr. Cooke reported that the churches had also responded to the Egyptian crisis and while the needs were not as dramatic, "the churches have been able to act ecumenically, and we hope as reconcilers."

Ulrich van Beyma, secretary for the Division's work outside Europe, and just back from a three-week's visit to the Middle East, reported to the committee. There are, he said, about 20,000 to 25,000 refugees around Port Said, Egypt, who cannot move back to their homes for at least six months. He said tents were needed.

The committee, agreed to assist CIMADE (French Protestant voluntary relief organization) which is sending a team into Algiers. The project, calls for three workers to live in an abandoned church in Algiers and work in the community. "There is no active church in North Africa that plays any real role," Dr. Visser 't Hooft said. "There is an enormous need for a team approach."

Along the same line, the committee discussed assisting an Italian team that would work in an agricultural section of Italy. The group of technicians would live among the farmers and, along with welfare and social services, help to increase food production by using modern agricultural methods.

Mr. Ranjit Chetsingh urged that, in providing aid to the churches in India, consideration be given to establishing endowments rather than making piece-meal grants. Mr. Chetsingh is secretary of the Committee on Relief and Gift Supplies of the National Christian Council of India.

Mr. Simon Marantika, general secretary of the National Christian Council in Indonesia, said that while there are considerable differences between churches in Indonesia, the churches are beginning to look on themselves as one family. "The problem of unity is really a burning problem among us," he said.

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The 11-member committee noted "with gratitude" the response of the member churches of the WCC to the Division's appeal for the present emergency in Hungary and for other Eastern European countries, and called for continued aid for the whole refugee program. "The general atmosphere is that we can expect a considerable movement of refugees all over Europe in the next few years," Dr. Edgar M. S. Chandler, WCC director of Service to Refugees, reported.

The World Council of Churches spent a total of $8,[illegible] refugees during the past year, Dr. Chandler told the group, but added, "The figures are not important unless you see behind each one a refugee." By the start of January, 4,777 Hungarians registered with the WCC had received visas or were sent to places in the United States. In one of the most amazing events in history, Dr. Chandler said, governmental agencies out and the church agencies have worked quickly in the resettlement of the refugees of the revolution in Hungary. To date about 15[illegible],000 people have left Hungary.

To help to the job, the WCC's staff of clergy in Austria has been doubled since last October and six mobile teams are now at work giving welfare, material and counselling services. There are, however, about 70,000 refugees still in Austria. The Austrian government is unable to care for only about 21,000 permanently.

At the same time, Dr. Chandler announced that in addition to the resettlement of Hungarians, 30,078 persons have entered the United States under the recently expired US Refugee Relief Act 1953-5. Dr. E. Morris Wilson, a committee member and executive director of Church World Service, stated that such persons are not in the United States by a person who was responsible for this. He related not that through CWS, the CR [illegible] provided a total of 60,000 sponsorships for refugees.

While many of the refugees are now resettling Christians, the Division's director, Dr. Leslie Cooke, said that the church has made its witness in them by assisting them in the refugee camps and in their resettlement.

Dr. Cooke reported that the church has also responded to the Egyptian crisis and while the needs are not as dramatic, "our churches have been able to act promptly, and we hope to respond."

Hilda von Regan, secretary for the Diakonie work outside Europe, and just back from a three-week's visit to the Middle East, reported to the committee. There are, he said, about 30,000 to 35,000 refugees mainly from Gaza, Egypt, who cannot move back to their homes for at least six months. In said tents were needed.

The committee, agreed to assist CHARE (French Protestant voluntary relief organization) which is sending a team into Algeria. The project, aims to have workers to live in an abandoned church in Algeria and work in the community. "There is no active church in North Africa that plays any real role," Dr. Tillman Nagel said. "There is an economic need, but not a team approach."

Along the same line, the committee discussed assisting an Italian team that would work in an agricultural section of Italy. The group, of technicians would live among the farmers and, along with other and social services, help to increase food production by using modern agricultural methods.

Dr. Benjik Chakravarti urged that, in providing aid to the churches in India, consideration be given to establishing mutualcare rather than making place-to-all grants. Dr. Chakravarti is secretary of the Committee on Relief and Aid Supplies of the National Christian Council of India.

Dr. Otmon Hermitte, general secretary of the National Christian Council in Indonesia, said that while there are considerable differences between churches in Indonesia, the churches are working in close [illegible] in the work. The problem of [illegible]

Hungarian Lutherans to Attend Lutheran World Federation Assembly in USA

The Hungarian government has promised that representatives from the Hungarian Lutheran Church, including Bishop Lajos Ordass, may attend the Third Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Minneapolis, Minn., USA, from August 15-25, Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist, LWF executive secretary, announced upon his arrival in Vienna after a five-day visit to Budapest.

"I am now in a position to announce that Bishop Ordass will preach the opening sermon at the Assembly," Dr. Lund-Quist said during a press conference in Vienna on February 4. "At the present time, the government is willing to permit an exchange of students, professors and pastors. There is to be a theological conference sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation in Austria in May and the Hungarian government will allow representatives to participate. The government has promised that representatives will be permitted to participate in Minneapolis."

Dr. Lund-Quist and the Rev. Mogens Zeuthen, LWF secretary for Minority Lutheran Churches, left for Budapest on January 30 after receiving their Hungarian visas for the purpose of establishing contact with the Lutheran Church there and in order to find out the material needs of the Church. "We also went to Hungary to negotiate with the government about the local church situation," the LWF executive secretary said. Their government contact was particularly Mr. Janos Horvath,president of the State Office of Church Affairs (in the Ministry of Education), with whom LWF officials had negotiated last August for the rehabilitation of Bishop Ordass. Pastor Zeuthen remained in Budapest an extra five days to continue further discussions on relief distribution.

In describing his impressions of Hungarian church life, Dr. Lund-Quist said that "at the moment, the church is permitted to preach freely, to teach religion and to visit the sick." When asked to explain what was meant by "preach freely", he said that this was true in the Western interpretation of the words, "as sermons are being preached in the United States."

The LWF leader also reported that there seems to be an improved situation in spirit among pastors and the people in the Hungarian Lutheran Church as compared with the situation when he was last in Budapest in August 1956 for the World Council of Churches Central Committee meetings.

When asked about the future of the Church under the Kadar government, Dr. Lund-Quist said that he could not comment on a political question. "I am a churchman, not a politician, and I do not want to voice a political judgment."

"At the present time, the government is only willing to discuss the problem of distribution of material aid with the International Red Cross," he said.

Dr. Lund-Quist also reported that Bishop Zoltan Turoczy was installed in his office as Bishop of the Northern District (west of the Danube) on February 6. At the same time, Dr. Zoltan Mady was installed as lay inspector of the District. Dr. Mady, a former president of the Hungarian Student Christian Movement, held this office from 1948 until 1952. He is now serving as lay inspector of a small church near Budapest. Pastor Zeuthen will represent the Federation at the installation ceremonies in Budapest.

When asked about the two former Lutheran bishops Lajos Vetoe and Laszlo Dezsery, Dr. Lund-Quist reported that Dezsery was now employed by Radio Budapest to "give lectures on morals." Vetoe was living on his pension and hoped to serve again in the church sometime in the future. He also said that all the pastors who had been dismissed by the former church leaders in 1948 during Bishop Ordass' trial and since then have all been reinstated by the Church.

The LWF representatives also spoke to 500 people at a meeting of Lutheran youth who are described by Dr. Lund-Quist as "starved for news and information about other churches". Lutheran and Reformed theological classes will begin next week. Thirty-three of the "pre-revolution" enrollment of thirty-six Lutheran students and all the professors are expected to return. Dr. Lund-Quist reported on his visit to the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches. E.P.S., Geneva

Hungarian Lutherans to Attend Lutheran World Federation Assembly in USA

The Hungarian government has promised that representatives from the Hungarian Lutheran Church, including Bishop Lajos Ordass, may attend the Third Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Minneapolis, Minn., USA, from August 15-25, Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist, LWF executive secretary, announced upon his arrival in Vienna after a five-day visit to Budapest.

"I am now in a position to announce that Bishop Ordass will preach the opening sermon at the Assembly," Dr. Lund-Quist said during a press conference in Vienna on February 4. "At the present time, the government is willing to permit an exchange of students, professors and pastors. There is to be a theological conference sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation in Austria in May and the Hungarian government will allow representatives to participate. The government has promised that representatives will be permitted to participate in Minneapolis."

Dr. Lund-Quist and the Rev. Mogens Zeuthen, LWF secretary for Minority Lutheran Churches, left for Budapest on January 30 after receiving their Hungarian visas for the purpose of establishing contact with the Lutheran Church there and in order to find out the material needs of the Church. "We also went to Hungary to negotiate with the government about the local church situation," the LWF executive secretary said. Their government contact was particularly Mr. Janos Horvath, president of the State Office of Church Affairs (in the Ministry of Education), with whom LWF officials had negotiated last August for the rehabilitation of Bishop Ordass. Pastor Zeuthen remained in Budapest an extra five days to continue further discussions on relief distribution.

In describing his impressions of Hungarian church life, Dr. Lund-Quist said that "at the moment, the church is permitted to preach freely, to teach religion and to visit the sick." When asked to explain what was meant by "preach freely", he said that this was true in the Western interpretation of the words, "as sermons are being preached in the United States."

The LWF leader also reported that there seems to be an improved situation in spirit among pastors and the people in the Hungarian Lutheran Church as compared with the situation when he was last in Budapest in August 1956 for the World Council of Churches Central Committee meetings.

When asked about the future of the Church under the Kadar government, Dr. Lund-Quist said that he could not comment on a political question. "I am a churchman, not a politician, and I do not want to voice a political judgment."

"At the present time, the government is only willing to discuss the problem of distribution of material aid with the International Red Cross," he said.

Dr. Lund-Quist also reported that Bishop Zoltan Turczy was installed in his office as Bishop of the Northern District (west of the Danube) on February 5. At the same time, Dr. Zoltan Mady was installed as lay inspector of the District. Dr. Mady, a former president of the Hungarian Student Christian Movement, held this office from 1948 until 1952. He is now serving as lay inspector of a small church near Budapest. Pastor Zeuthen will represent the Federation at the installation ceremonies in Budapest.

When asked about the two former Lutheran bishops Lajos Vetoe and Laszlo Deszery, Dr. Lund-Quist reported that Deszery was now employed by Radio Budapest to "give lectures on morals." Vetoe was living on his pension and hoped to serve again in the church sometime in the future. He also said that all the pastors who had been dismissed by the former church leaders in 1946 during Bishop Ordass' trial and since then have all been reinstated by the Church.

The LWF representatives also spoke to 500 people at a meeting of Lutheran youth who are described by Dr. Lund-Quist as "starved for news and information about other churches". Lutheran and Reformed theological classes will begin next week. Thirty-three of the "pre-revolution" enrollment of thirty-six Lutheran students and all the professors are expected to return. Dr. Lund-Quist reported on his visit to the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches.

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